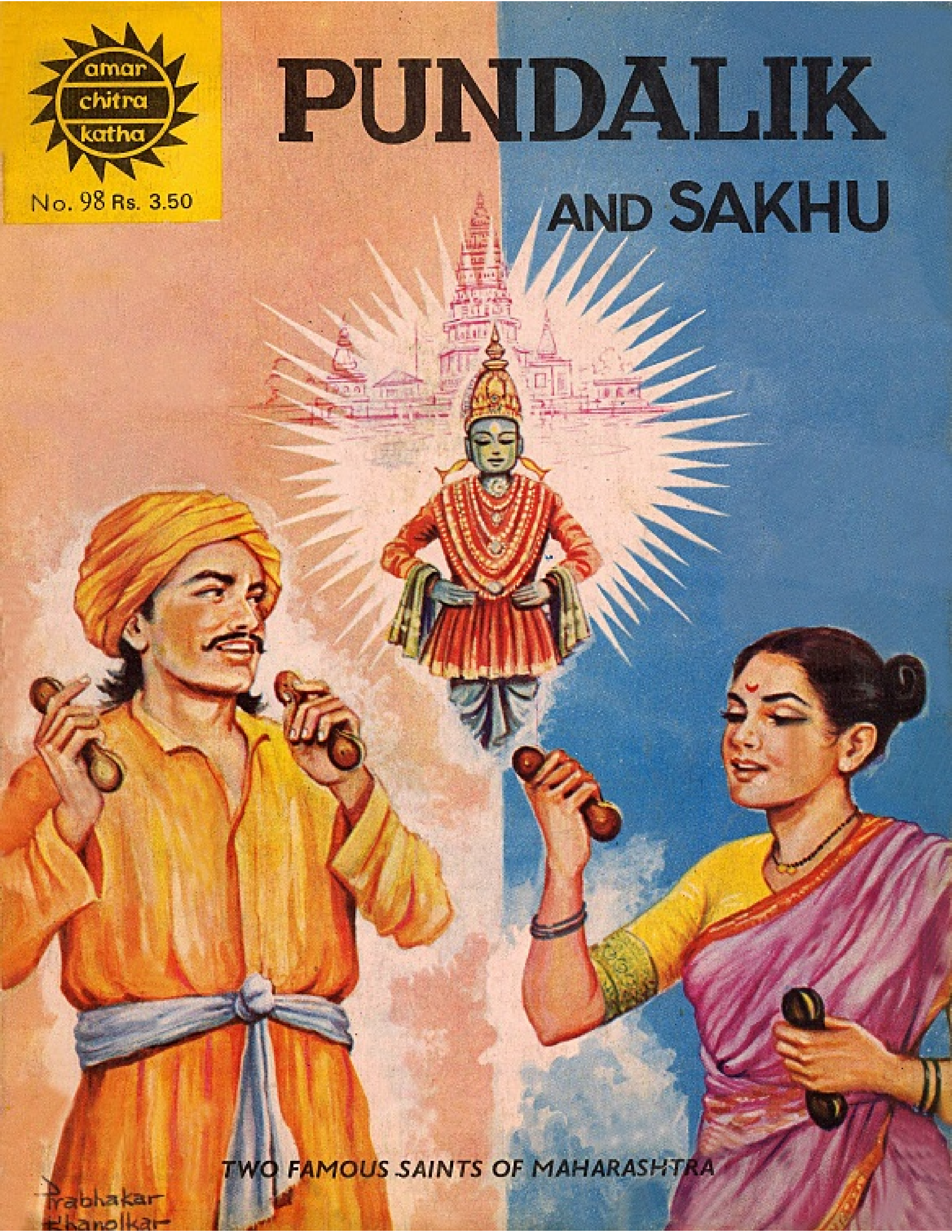

amar chitra katha
No. 98 Rs. 3.50
PUNDALIK
AND SAKHU
TWO FAMOUS SAINTS OF MAHARASHTRA
Prabhakar Khanolkar

Twice a year on the Ekadashis of the months of Ashadh (around August) and Kartik (around April), pilgrims from far and near come to Pandharpur, a famous pilgrim centre in Maharashtra, known for its Vithoba temple. These pilgrims are called 'Varkaris' and their pilgrimage —a 'Vari'.

The deity of the temple, Vithoba, also called Vithal or *Panduranga* by his devotees at Pandharpur, is none other than Shri Vishnu or Krishna.

Pundalik was the man who caused Sri Vishnu to stay at Pandharpur. People are so grateful to Pundalik that they visit his Samadhi (which is about a furlong away from the temple), before they seek the blessings of Vithal.

Saint Sakhu was a great devotee of Panduranga and is a well-known saint of Maharashtra.

It is believed that she was staying in Karhad near the confluence of the rivers, Krishna and Koyna, where stands to this day a built-up embankment named after her.. She probably lived during the time of the first Peshwa of the Marathas.

Her silent suffering and her unflinching devotion for Panduranga have endeared her to every Maharashtrian.

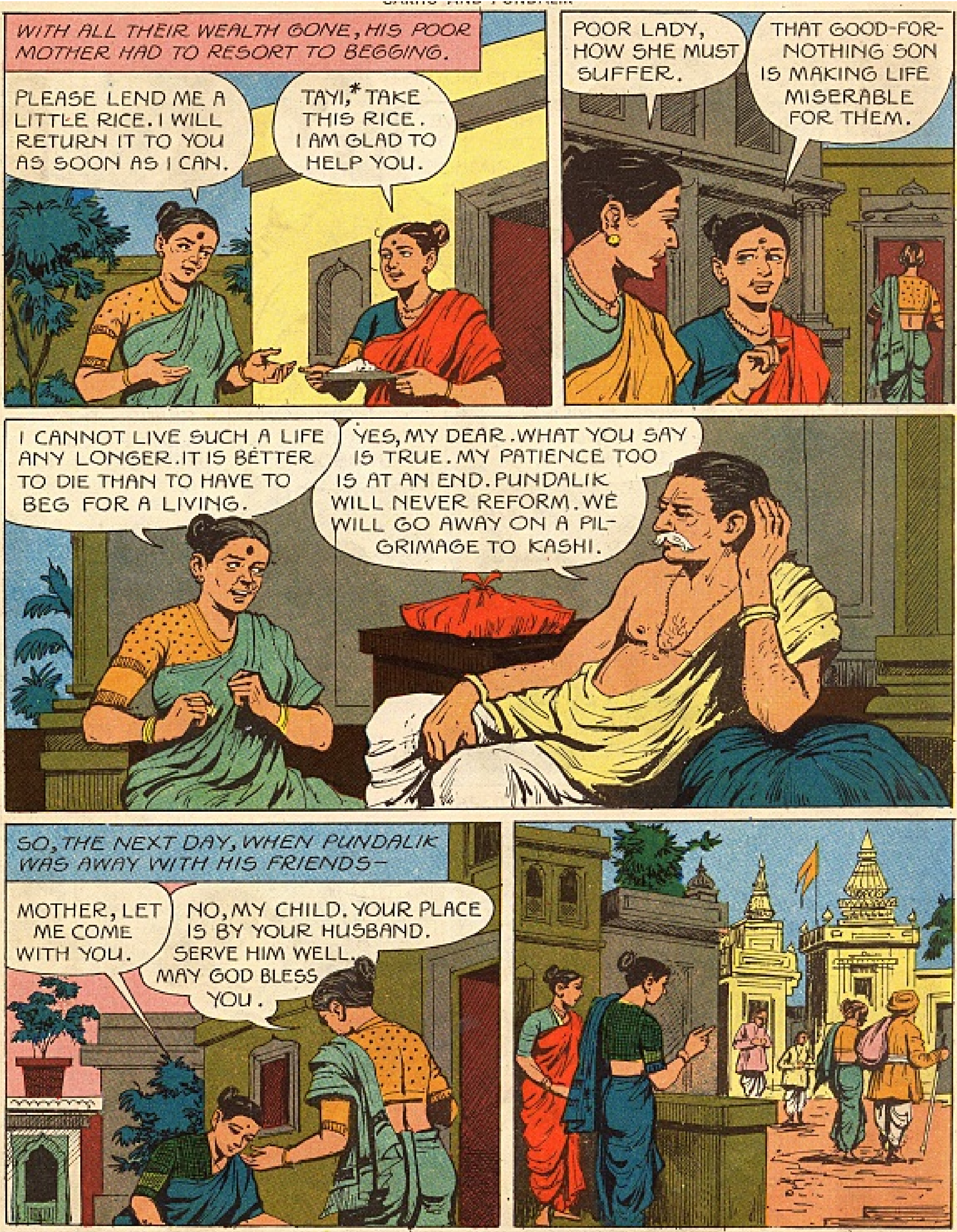
Published by H.G. Mirchandani for IBH Publishers Pvt. Ltd., 22, Bhulabhai Desai Road, Bombay 400 026 and printed by him at IBH Printers, Marol Naka, Mathuradas Vissanji Road, Andheri (East), Bombay 400 059.

Editor : Anant Pai

Script: Shobha Gangolli & Malati Deshpande Illustrations: Prabhakar Khanolkar


PUNDALIK
PUNDALIK WAS THE ONLY CHILD OF HIS PARENTS.


HE WAS BROUGHT UP WITH GREAT LOVE AND AFFECTION. BUT AS HE GREW OLDER, HE FELL INTO BAD COMPANY.
ALAS, WE BELIEVED THAT OUR SON WOULD TAKE CARE OF US IN OUR OLD AGE. BUT HE DOESN'T EVEN SPEAK POLITELY TO US.
HE SPENT ALL HIS TIME GAMBLING.
OH NO! I'VE LOST AGAIN! I DON'T HAVE ANY MONEY WITH ME NOW.
I'LL LEND YOU SOME.
HE WAS FOND OF HIS WORTHLESS FRIENDS.
LET'S BE MERRY. LIFE IS FULL OF FUN.
YES, MY FRIEND. LIVE FOR TODAY. WHY THINK OF TOMORROW?
HE WAS HEARTLESS AND MEAN TO THOSE AT HOME.
PUNDALIK, YOU HAVE SPENT ALL THE MONEY THAT WE HAD. PLEASE COME TO YOUR SENSES, MY SON.
DON'T YOU DARE TELL ME WHAT TO DO! IF YOU DON'T HAVE MONEY, GIVE ME YOUR GOLD!



*ELDER SISTER



A LITTLE LATER, PUNDALIK RETURNED HOME.
WHERE IS MOTHER?
THEY HAVE GONE ON A PILGRIMAGE TO KASHI.
WELL, LET THEM GO. I AM HUNGRY. GIVE ME SOMETHING TO EAT.
THERE IS NOT A SINGLE MORSEL OF FOOD IN THE HOUSE.
THEN GO AND BORROW SOME FROM THE NEIGHBOURS.
I TRIED, BUT THEY REFUSE. THEY LOVED YOUR PARENTS. NOW THAT THEY ARE GONE, NOBODY WANTS TO HELP US.
PUNDALIK WAS NOT IN THE LEAST PERTURBED. HE WENT TO THE MONEYLENDER. BUT—
BEGONE. I SHALL NO LONGER LEND YOU ANY MONEY. YOUR PARENTS HAVE LEFT. WHO WILL REPAY THE LOANS?


EVEN HIS FRIENDS AVOIDED HIM, NOW THAT HE HAD NO MONEY.
I AM SORRY, PUNDALIK. I MYSELF AM IN NEED OF MONEY.
WE'D BETTER GO AWAY BEFORE HE ASKS US!
AT LAST, PUNDALIK REALISED THE TRUTH.
WHAT HAVE I DONE! MY PARENTS WERE THE ONLY ONES WHO REALLY CARED FOR ME. AND I HAVE DRIVEN THEM AWAY!
I AM A SINNER. I BROUGHT NOTHING BUT MISERY TO MY PARENTS. WILL GOD EVER FORGIVE ME?
I TOO WILL GO TO KASHI AND PURIFY MYSELF IN THE SACRED GANGA. THEN I WILL REFORM MYSELF. I WILL STOP GAMBLING AND START WORKING.


THE NEXT DAY, PUNDALIK LEFT FOR KASHI WITH HIS WIFE.
THEY HAD TO CROSS A DENSE FOREST.
I AM TIRED AND HUNGRY. I CANNOT WALK ANY FURTHER.
LET US REST HERE TONIGHT. I WILL GO AND BRING YOU SOME FRUITS AND BERRIES.
AFTER HAVING EATEN THE FRUITS AND BERRIES, PUNDALIK'S WIFE DROPPED OFF TO SLEEP, WHILE HE KEPT GUARD.
SUDDENLY—
WHAT'S THAT? I THINK THERE IS SOMETHING MOVING IN THE FOLIAGE. IS IT A WILD ANIMAL?

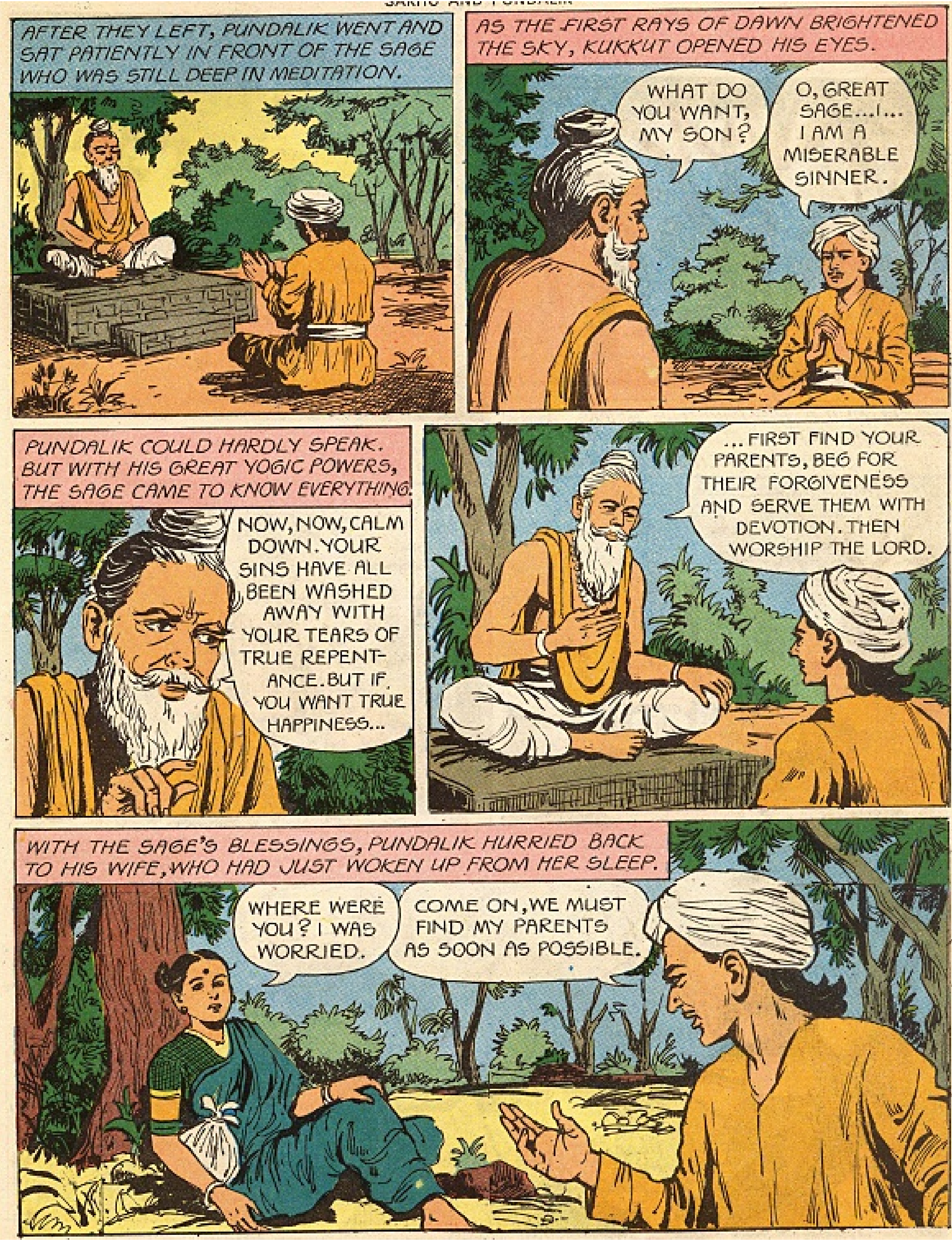

PUNDALIK GOT UP TO INVESTIGATE.
THE SOUND HAD BEEN MADE BY THREE DARK LADIES MOVING THROUGH THE BUSHES.
PUNDALIK FOLLOWED THEM...
...TILL THEY STEPPED INTO A LITTLE CLEARING, WHERE SAGE KUKKUT SAT DEEP IN MEDITATION.


PUNDALIK HID BEHIND A BUSH AND WATCHED WHILE THEY SWEPT THE COURTYARD CLEAN.
THEN THEY SPRINKLED SOME WATER ON THE GROUND...
...AND SPREAD COWDUNG ON IT.
AS THEY DID SO, A DRASTIC CHANGE CAME OVER THEM.
AND LO! THEY TURNED INTO LADIES, GLOWING WITH A UNIQUE RADIANCE.


THERE WAS A LOOK OF DISBELIEF IN PUNDALIK'S EYES, AS HE STOOD GAZING AT THE THREE FIGURES.
WHEN, HAVING FINISHED THEIR WORK, THE LADIES BEGAN TO RETRACE THEIR STEPS —
THEY MUST BE GODDESSES WHO HAVE DESCENDED FROM THE HEAVENS. I MUST SPEAK TO THEM.
SO, AS THEY CAME NEARER, PUNDALIK STEPPED FORWARD.
SHOO — GO AWAY! DON'T STAND IN OUR WAY! YOU ARE ONE OF THE WORST SINNERS IN THE WORLD.


PLEASE HAVE MERCY ON ME. I KNOW I HAVE SINNED. I AM REPENTANT. PLEASE TELL ME WHO YOU ARE.
I AM RIVER GANGA.
I AM RIVER YAMUNA.
I AM RIVER SARASWATI.


PUNDALIK KNELT BEFORE THEM.
EVERY DAY COUNTLESS PILGRIMS COME AND BATHE IN OUR WATERS AND WE BECOME DARK WITH THEIR SINS.
EVERY NIGHT WE COME HERE TO PURIFY OURSELVES.
IF YOU REALLY WISH TO REFORM, SEEK THE BLESSINGS OF SAGE KUKKUT. HE WILL GUIDE YOU.


AFTER THEY LEFT, PUNDALIK WENT AND SAT PATIENTLY IN FRONT OF THE SAGE WHO WAS STILL DEEP IN MEDITATION.
AS THE FIRST RAYS OF DAWN BRIGHTENED THE SKY, KUKKUT OPENED HIS EYES.
WHAT DO YOU WANT, MY SON?
O, GREAT SAGE...I... I AM A MISERABLE SINNER.
PUNDALIK COULD HARDLY SPEAK. BUT WITH HIS GREAT YOGIC POWERS, THE SAGE CAME TO KNOW EVERYTHING.
NOW, NOW, CALM DOWN. YOUR SINS HAVE ALL BEEN WASHED AWAY WITH YOUR TEARS OF TRUE REPENTANCE. BUT IF YOU WANT TRUE HAPPINESS...
...FIRST FIND YOUR PARENTS, BEG FOR THEIR FORGIVENESS AND SERVE THEM WITH DEVOTION. THEN WORSHIP THE LORD.
WITH THE SAGE'S BLESSINGS, PUNDALIK HURRIED BACK TO HIS WIFE, WHO HAD JUST WOKEN UP FROM HER SLEEP.
WHERE WERE YOU? I WAS WORRIED.
COME ON, WE MUST FIND MY PARENTS AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.


HE WAS NO LONGER INTERESTED IN THE PILGRIMAGE. HIS ONE AIM NOW WAS TO TRACE HIS PARENTS.
MEANWHILE, HIS PARENTS, BEING OLD, HAD TRAVELLED VERY SLOWLY AND HAD NOT YET REACHED KASHI.
SO PUNDALIK SOON CAUGHT UP WITH THEM AND FELL AT THEIR FEET.
FORGIVE ME, DEAR PARENTS, FOR GIVING YOU SO MUCH TROUBLE.
GOD BLESS YOU, SON. TODAY YOU HAVE MADE US TRULY HAPPY. COME, LET US GO TO KASHI, AND OFFER OUR PRAYERS THERE.


A FEW DAYS LATER, THEY REACHED KASHI. AFTER BATHING IN THE SACRED WATERS OF THE GANGA...
...THEY OFFERED PRAYERS AT THE TEMPLES THERE.
THEN THEY TRAVELLED SOUTH TO PANDHARPUR...
...WHERE PUNDALIK BUILT A SMALL HUT FOR THEM TO STAY.
HE SERVED HIS PARENTS WITH SINGLE-MINDED DEVOTION AND RESPECT.
HE ALSO READ SOME HOLY BOOKS DAILY, AND MEDITATED ON LORD KRISHNA.



ONE AFTERNOON, AS PUNDALIK WAS BUSY PRESSING HIS FATHER'S FEET, HE HEARD SOMEONE CALL.
PUNDALIK!
PUNDALIK OPENED HIS EYES. IT WAS THE LORD STANDING AT HIS DOOR!
WON'T YOU ASK ME IN?
MY DUTY TO MY PARENT COMES EVEN BEFORE GOD.
I WILL NOT GET UP TO WELCOME YOU, LEST I DISTURB MY FATHER'S SLEEP. BUT COME IN, MY LORD.
I'M SORRY. I DON'T EVEN HAVE A DECENT PLACE FOR YOU TO SIT! PLEASE USE THIS BRICK, MY LORD.
KRISHNA STEPPED ON THE BRICK AND PLACING HIS HANDS ON HIS HIPS, SMILED.
PUNDALIK, I AM PLEASED BY YOUR DEVOTION TO YOUR PARENTS. ASK FOR ANY BOON AND I SHALL GRANT IT.
I HAVE SEEN YOU WITH MY OWN EYES. WHAT MORE CAN I ASK FOR? BUT IF YOU INSIST...

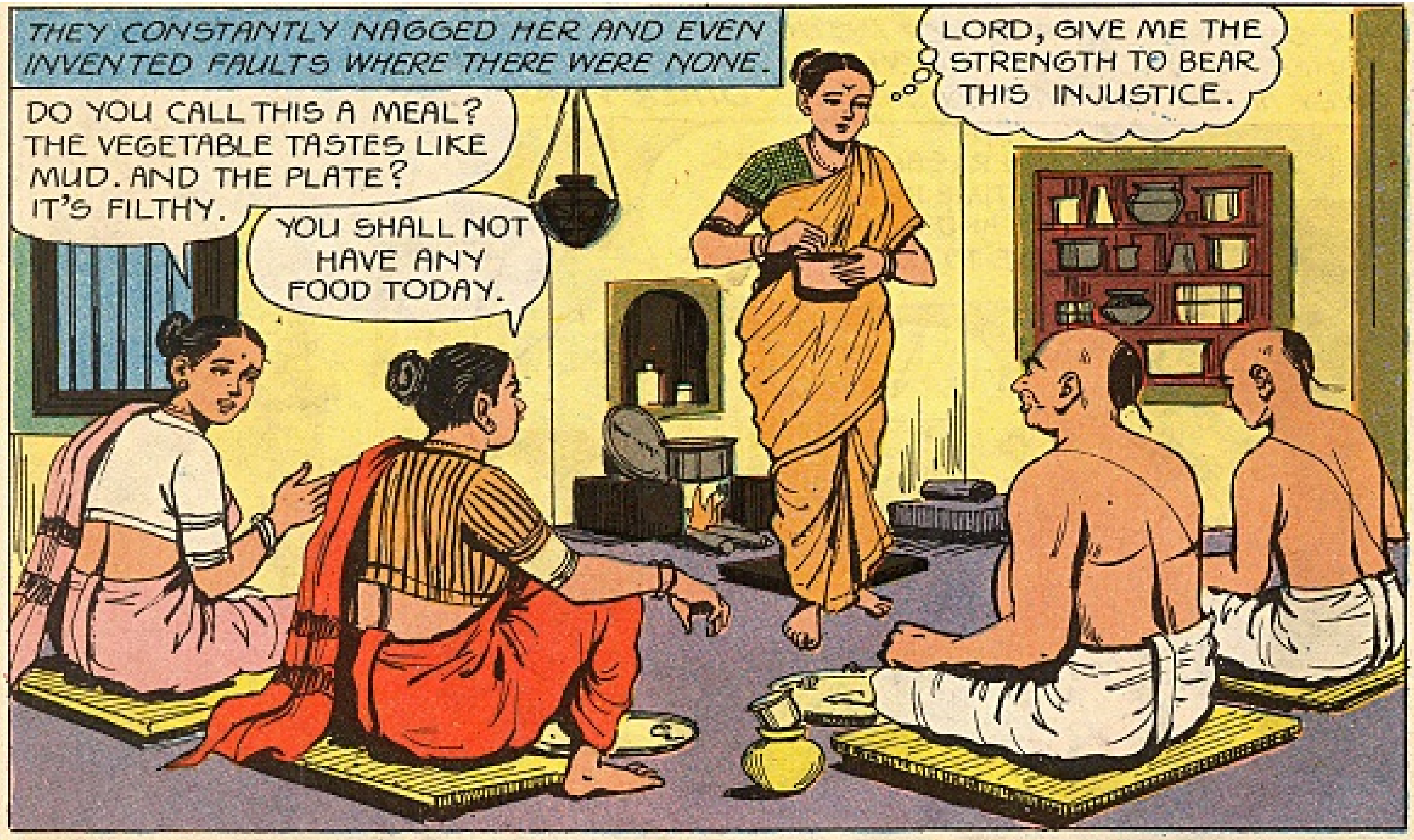


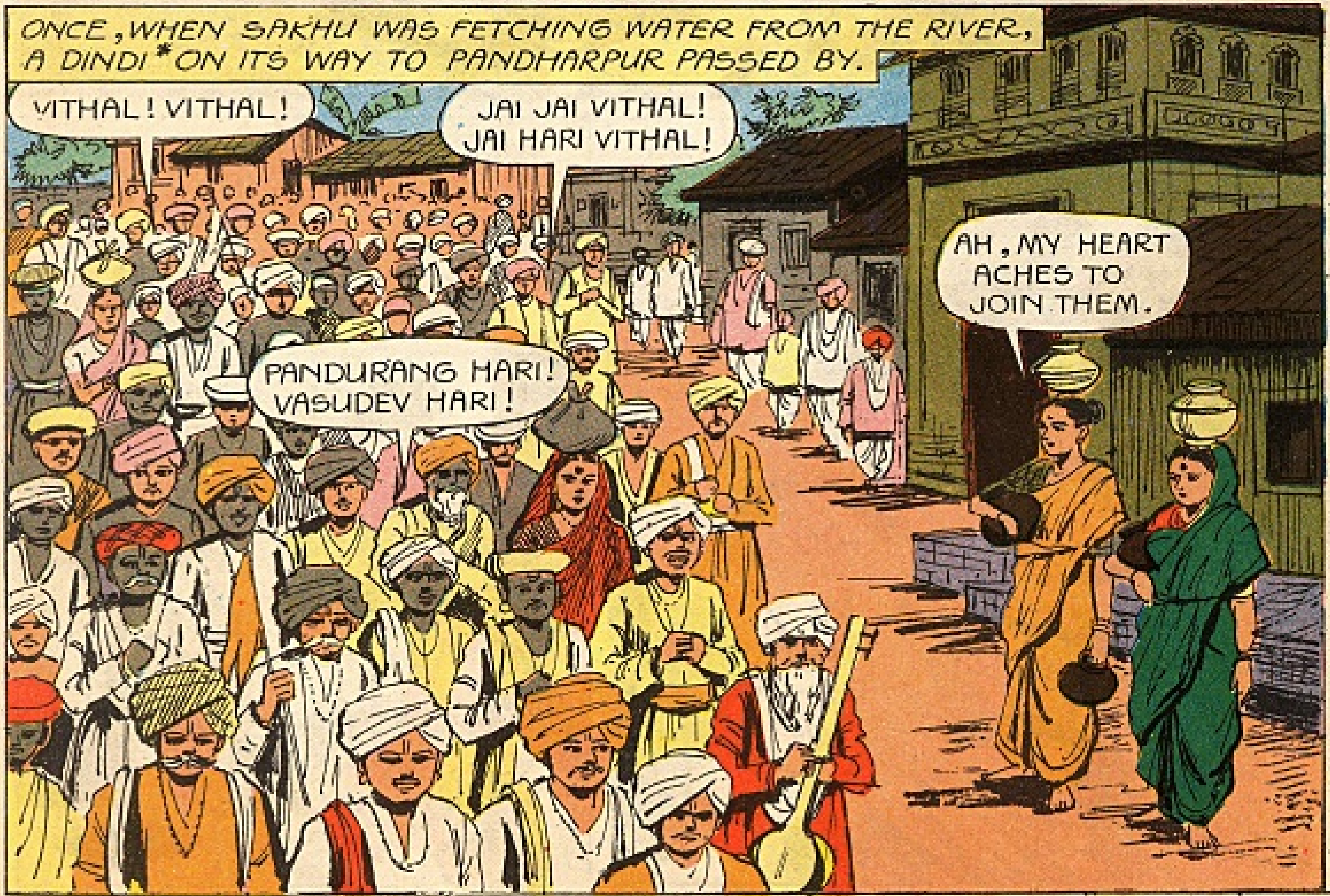
*A CORRUPTION OF THE WORD VISHNUBA. THE SUFFIX 'BA' IS AN HONORIFIC. KRISHNA AS IS WELL KNOWN, IS AN INCARNATION OF VISHNU.



* NAME OF VISHNU.

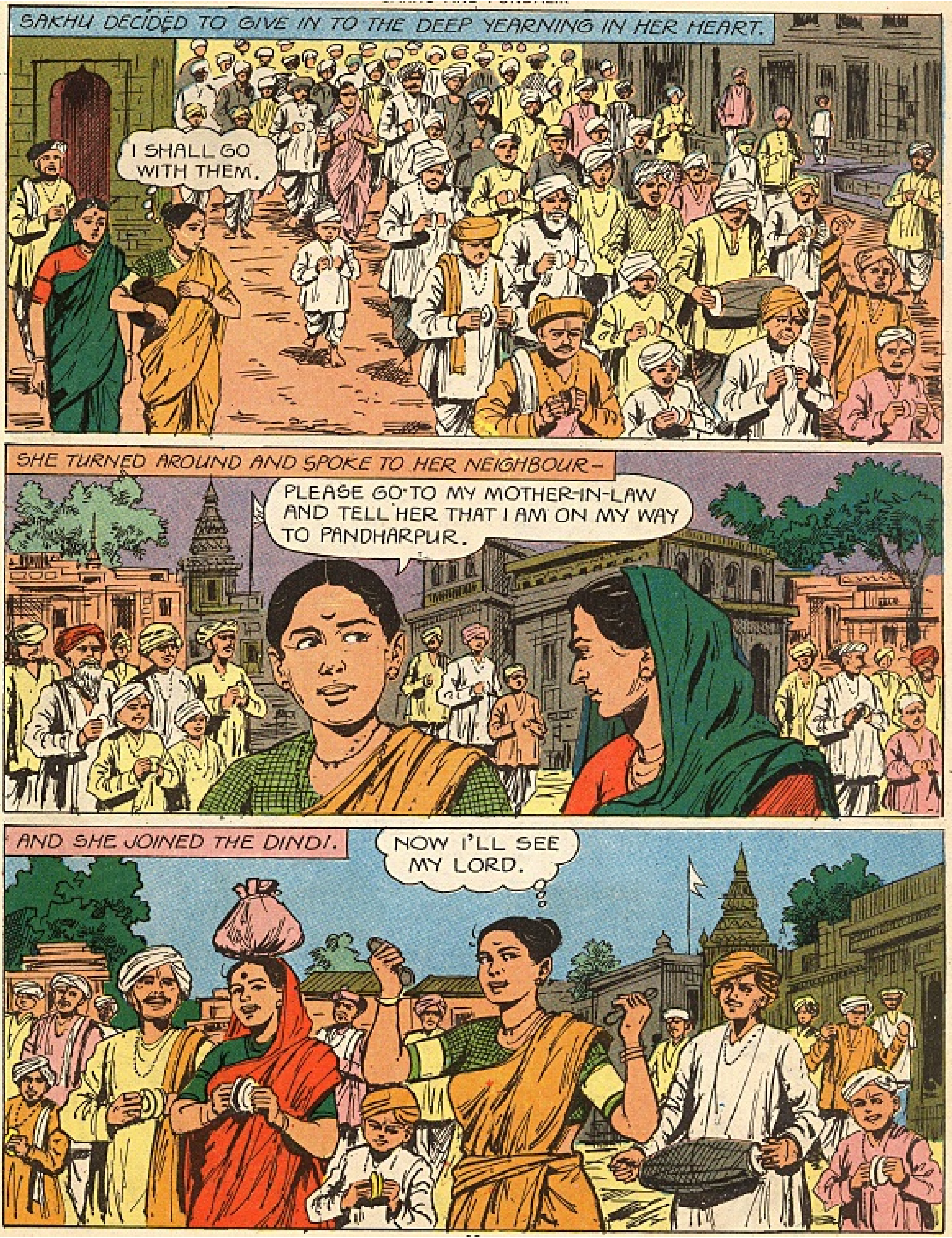

HER SISTER-IN-LAW AND HER MOTHER-IN-LAW HAD NO FAITH IN HER DEVOTION. SO, THOUGH SHE SAT BEFORE HIS IDOL ONLY AFTER SHE HAD FINISHED ALL OTHER WORK–
MOTHER, SAKHU WASTES HER TIME IN OFFERING PUJA AND PRAYERS; AND I HAVE TO DO ALL THE WORK.
I'LL SET HER RIGHT!
YOU FOOL! WHO DO YOU THINK IS GOING TO FINISH ALL THE WORK? IS YOUR PANDURANG GOING TO COOK AND CLEAN FOR YOU?
I WILL THROW HIM OUT OF THIS HOUSE, THE NUISANCE!
MOTHER! PLEASE...





* A GROUP OF PILGRIMS, SINGING AND DANCING ON A PILGRIMAGE.


MEANWHILE, THE NEIGHBOUR WENT TO HER MOTHER-IN-LAW.
SAKHU IS ON HER WAY TO PANDHARPUR WITH A DINDI.
HOW DARE SHE GO WITHOUT MY PERMISSION!
THE MOTHER-IN-LAW POUNCED ON SAKHU'S HUSBAND.
WHAT ARE YOU WAITING FOR, YOU GOOD-FOR-NOTHING! GO AND BRING HER BACK.
THE SON DID AS HE WAS TOLD.
ENOUGH OF YOUR PANDURANG, YOU FOOLISH WOMAN.
JAI! JAI VITHAL!
POOR GIRL!


SAKHU DECIDED TO GIVE IN TO THE DEEP YEARNING IN HER HEART.
I SHALL GO WITH THEM.
SHE TURNED AROUND AND SPOKE TO HER NEIGHBOUR–
PLEASE GO TO MY MOTHER-IN-LAW AND TELL HER THAT I AM ON MY WAY TO PANDHARPUR.
AND SHE JOINED THE DINDI.
NOW I'LL SEE MY LORD.


WHEN THEY REACHED HOME–
TIE HER TO THE PILLAR AND STARVE HER.
NOW LET YOUR VITHOBA HELP YOU.
YOU HAVE ALL THE TIME TO WORSHIP HIM NOW.
FOR DAYS TOGETHER SAKHU WAS NOT GIVEN ANYTHING TO EAT AND SHE WAS FAMISHED.
O MY LORD PANDURANG, WILL I EVER REACH YOU?


SUDDENLY—
NO! CAN IT BE TRUE? I CAN SEE HIM BEFORE MY EYES EVEN NOW!
AS SHE CLOSED HER EYES, SHE SAW PANDURANG AND RUKMINI IN HER MIND'S EYE.
LORD, IF I CAN COME TO YOU BUT ONCE, I'LL DIE PEACE-FULLY.
MEANWHILE, MILLIONS OF DEVOTEES HAD GATHERED IN PANDHARPUR. THE TOWN WAS FILLED WITH THE CHANTING AND DANCING OF THE DEVOTEES, INCLUDING THOSE FROM KARHAD.
POOR SAKHU. SHE MUST BE FEELING MISERABLE.
MAY PANDURANG RELEASE HER FROM HER PLIGHT.


INSIDE THE TEMPLE, PANDURANG BECAME RESTLESS. RUKMINI, HIS CONSORT, QUESTIONED HIM.
WHAT IS WORRYING YOU, MY LORD?
IT IS SAKHU. I MUST RUSH TO HER HELP. BUT MY OUTWARD FORM WILL REMAIN HERE.
AT MIDNIGHT, PANDURANG LEFT HIS SEAT TO GO TO SAKHU IN KARHAD.
I'LL TAKE HER PLACE AND STAY IN HER HOUSE.
PANDURANG TOOK THE FORM OF A WOMAN AND STOOD BEFORE SAKHU.
GO TO PANDHARPUR. I'LL TAKE YOUR PLACE TILL YOU RETURN.


AH, MY FRIEND, I CANNOT THANK YOU ENOUGH.
AFTER SAKHU WENT OUT, PANDURANG ONCE AGAIN CHANGED HIS FORM — THIS TIME, TO LOOK LIKE SAKHU.
GO AND JOIN THE DEVOTEES AT PANDHARPUR.
SAKHU JOYFULLY SET OUT.
I WONDER WHO THE GOOD WOMAN WAS. BECAUSE OF HER, AT LAST I WILL BE ABLE TO SEE PANDURANG WITH MY OWN EYES.
MEANWHILE, AT HOME, FOR SOME REASON SAKHU'S HUSBAND WAS SUDDENLY FILLED WITH COMPASSION.
WE HAVE TREATED YOU BADLY. WILL YOU FORGIVE US?
I AM HAPPY YOU HAVE COME TO ME.

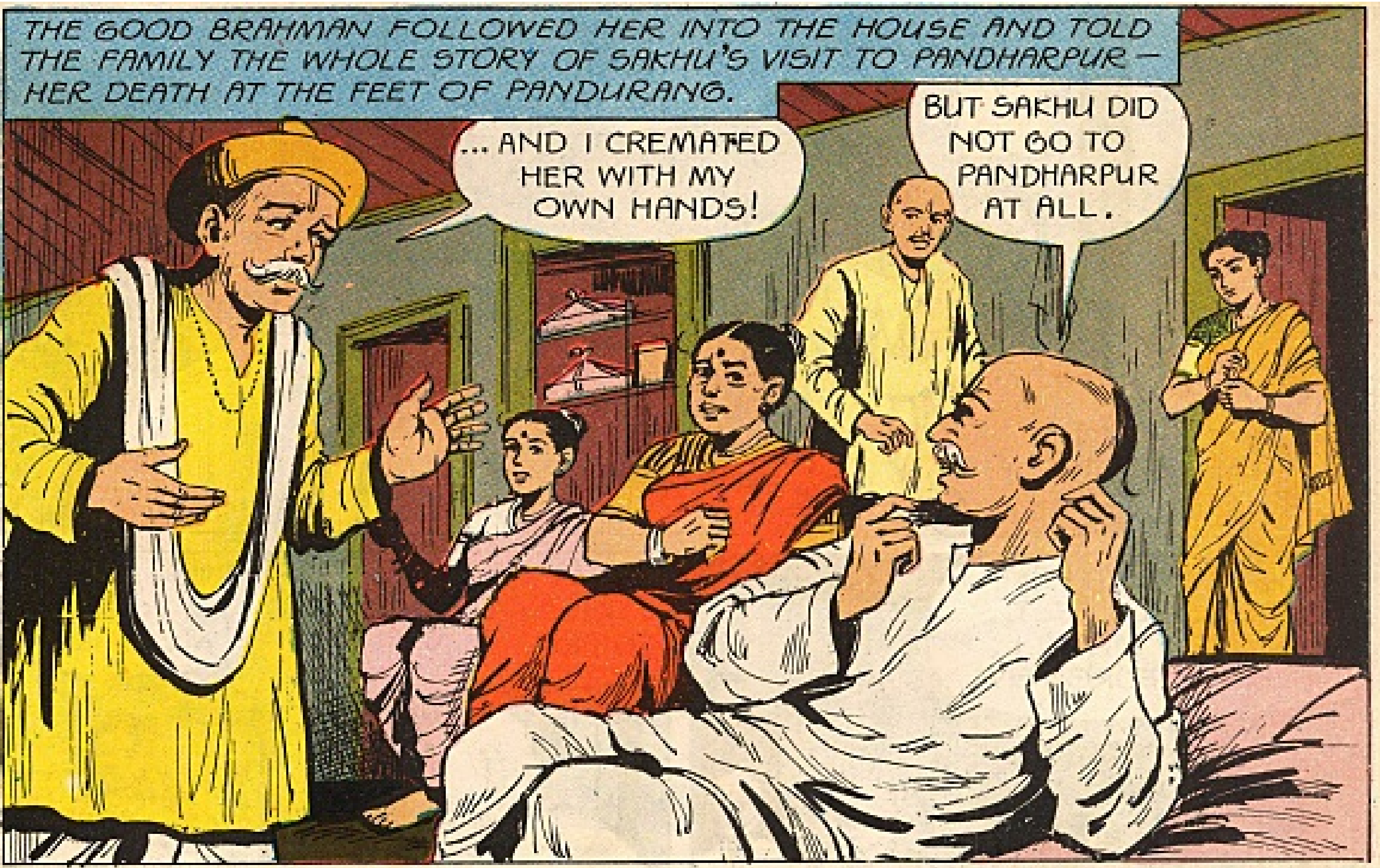

PANDURANG, POSING AS SAKHU, SERVED HER HUSBAND AND HIS PARENTS.
IS MY BATH READY?
IT IS. YOU'LL ENJOY THE HOT WATER.
SHE MAKES SUCH A NEAT BED.
DAUGHTER, YOUR TOUCH IS REALLY SOOTHING.
MEANWHILE, SAKHU HAD REACHED THE TEMPLE AT PANDHARPUR.
AT LAST I HAVE SEEN YOU WITH MY OWN EYES. I DESIRE NOTHING MORE.


I DO NOT WISH TO LIVE ANY LONGER.
SUDDENLY-
THE WOMAN IS DEAD.
WHAT A PIOUS SOUL! WHO COULD SHE BE?
A BRAHMAN PILGRIM FROM KARHAD IMMEDIATELY IDENTIFIED HER.
WHY, THIS IS OUR SAKHU, FROM KARHAD!

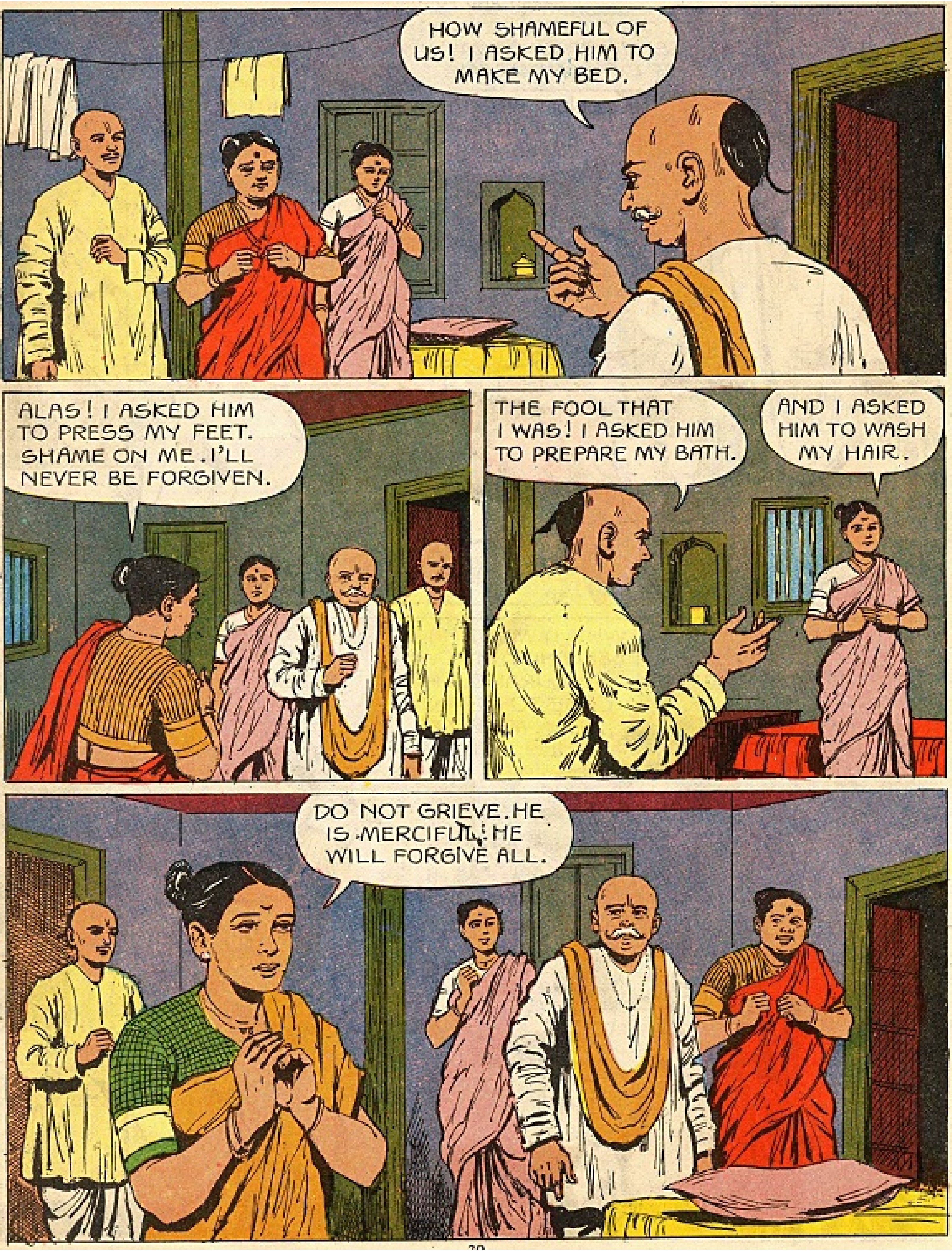

BEING A GOOD MAN HE ARRANGED FOR HER CREMATION AND LAST RITES. SHE WAS CREMATED ON THE SANDY BANKS OF CHANDRABHAGA.
PANDURANG HARI! VASUDEV HARI!
JAI JAI VITHAL! JAI HARI VITHAL!
MEANWHILE, IN THE TEMPLE, RUKMINI WAS WORRIED.
SAKHU HAS BEEN CREMATED. IF SHE DOES NOT RETURN TO KARHAD, WHO'LL FREE MY HUSBAND? HOW CAN HE RETURN TO ME?
SO RUKMINI BROUGHT SAKHU BACK TO LIFE.
RETURN TO YOUR PLACE AMONG YOUR PEOPLE.

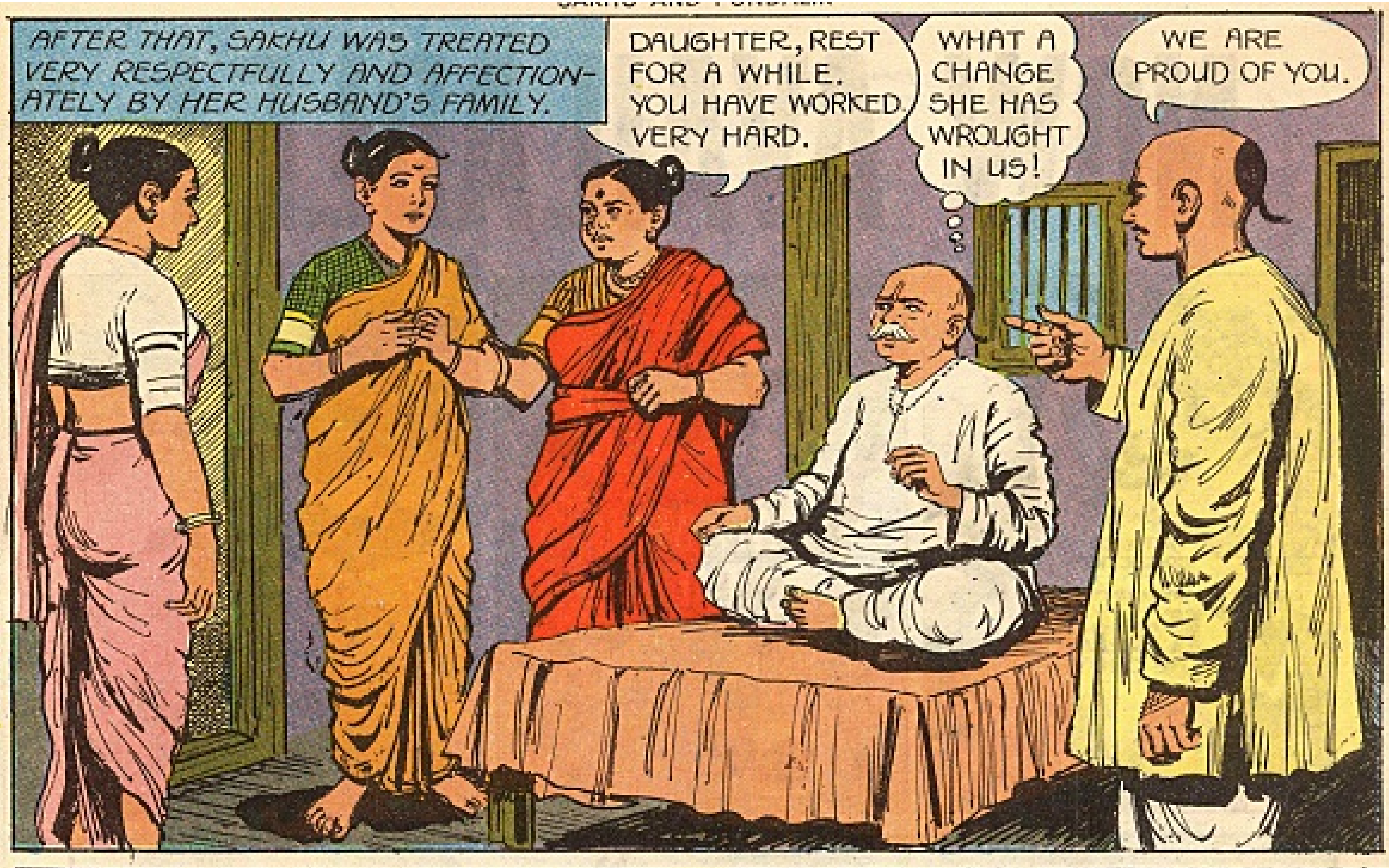


* BECAUSE, PANDURANG HAD AGAIN CHANGED HIS FORM.


THE GOOD BRAHMAN FOLLOWED HER INTO THE HOUSE AND TOLD THE FAMILY THE WHOLE STORY OF SAKHU'S VISIT TO PANDHARPUR — HER DEATH AT THE FEET OF PANDURANG.
...AND I CREMATED HER WITH MY OWN HANDS!
BUT SAKHU DID NOT GO TO PANDHARPUR AT ALL.


SAKHU TOLD THEM THAT SHE HAD GONE. THEN —
WHY, IT MUST HAVE BEEN HIM. MY OWN PANDURANG, WHO CAME TO ME AND TOOK MY PLACE WHEN I WENT!
SO IT WAS ALL HIS DOING!
SUCH ARE THE WAYS OF THE LORD.

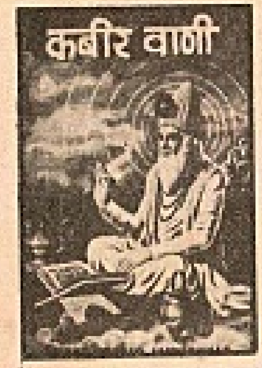

HOW SHAMEFUL OF US! I ASKED HIM TO MAKE MY BED.
ALAS! I ASKED HIM TO PRESS MY FEET. SHAME ON ME. I'LL NEVER BE FORGIVEN.
THE FOOL THAT I WAS! I ASKED HIM TO PREPARE MY BATH.
AND I ASKED HIM TO WASH MY HAIR.
DO NOT GRIEVE. HE IS MERCIFUL. HE WILL FORGIVE ALL.


AFTER THAT, SAKHU WAS TREATED VERY RESPECTFULLY AND AFFECTIONATELY BY HER HUSBAND'S FAMILY.
DAUGHTER, REST FOR A WHILE. YOU HAVE WORKED VERY HARD.
WHAT A CHANGE SHE HAS WROUGHT IN US!
WE ARE PROUD OF YOU.

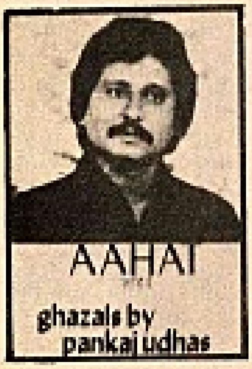

THEY TOO BECAME GREAT DEVOTEES OF PANDURANG AND OFTEN WENT TO HIS TEMPLE AT PANDHARPUR.
JAI VITHAL, JAI HARI VITHAL.



















Well-known artistes presented on

AMARNĀD

PRE-RECORDED CASSETTES



• Anoop Jalota • Avinash Vyas • Akhtar Azad • Aslam Khan • Bhagwanti Navani • Anant Kumar C. Naringrekar • Chandrasekhar • Deepak Kapadia • Datta Davjekar • Diwan Singh Maskeen • Dr. S. R. Chakravarty • Farooq Merchant • Govind Prasad Jaipurwale • Gajanan Karnad • Hussain Bux • Jeetu Tapan • Joe Rose • Jaywant Kulkarni • Krishnarao Chonkar • Kaka Hathrasi • Kamala Sista • Kuldip Singh • Mahendrajeet • Nirmala Devi • Nandu Bhende • Pankaj Udhas • Pt. Giriraj • Purushottamdas Jalota • Pandurang Dikshit • Robin Vaz • Ravindra Bhat • Ramavatar Chetan • Roshan Treasurywala • Shankar Shambhu • Sharda • Saraswati Kumar Deepak • Snehal Bhatkar • Sudarshan -Jaya Dheer • Ustad Ziauddin Dagar • Yeshwant Dev

AMARNAD pre-recorded cassettes re-capture, in sound and music, the rich cultural heritage of India. They cover a wide range of programmes in devotional, light classical and folk music. These programmes are rendered by leading and young, promising Artistes. Over 400 programmes available at all leading music shops. Buy only from authorised dealers and stockists.

Distributors:

India Book House Pvt. Ltd.

12-H, Dalamal Park, 223 Cuffe Parade, Colaba, Bombay-400 005 Gram : INDBOOK Phone : 215615

CALCUTTA	:	Humayun Court, 20/A Lindsay Street, Calcutta-700 087.	Tel : 236944/238974
MADRAS	:	1/155 Mount Road, Rayala Corp. Bldg., Madras-600 002.	Tel : 85568/87167/812481
BANGALORE	:	5th Main Road, Gandhi Nagar, Bangalore-560 009.	Tel : 26103/26104
HYDERABAD	:	3-4-423 Narayanaguda, Hyderabad-500 029.	Tel : 64945
BOMBAY	:	Amit Recording Studio, 142 Modi Street, Fort, Bombay 400 001.	Tel : 260454

Reprint : September 1983

RAMU TURNS DETECTIVE



AMAR CHITRA KATHA

AMAR CHITRA KATHA ARE BROUGHT OUT BY PEOPLE

- who care for children
- who screen each word and each picture as they have a lasting impact on impressionable minds.
- for whom Chitra Katha is more a vehicle of education than a business.

Published by:
INDIA BOOK HOUSE EDUCATION TRUST, BOMBAY-400 026

Distributed by:
INDIA BOOK HOUSE